CELESTIAL PASSION

RICHARD WATSON GILDER

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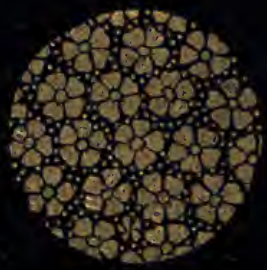

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THE CELESTIAL PASSION

By R. W. GILDER

I. THE NEW DAY
II. THE CELESTIAL PASSION
III. LYRICS

THE CELESTIAL PASSION BY RICHARD WATSON GILDER

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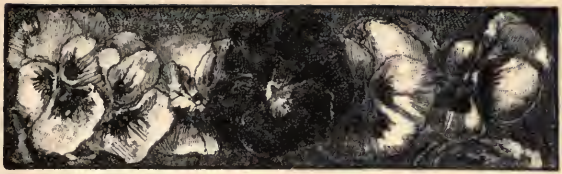
DECORATIONS BY H. DE K.

PRELUDE

THE CELESTIAL PASSION.

O WHITE and midnight sky, O starry bath,
Wash me in thy pure, heavenly, crystal flood;
Cleanse me, ye stars, from earthly soil and scath—
Let not one taint remain in spirit or blood!
Receive my soul, ye burning, awful deeps;
Touch and baptize me with the mighty power
That in ye thrills, while the dark planet sleeps;
Make me all yours for one blest, secret hour!
O glittering host, O high angelic choir,
Silence each tone that with thy music jars;
Fill me even as an urn with thy white fire
Till all I am is kindred to the stars!
Make me thy child, thou infinite, holy night,—
So shall my days be full of heavenly light!

PART I.



I.

ART AND LIFE.

SAID the Poet unto the Seer,
How shall I learn to tell
What I know of Heaven and Hell?
I speak, but to ashes turn
The passions that in me burn.
I shout to the skies, but I hear
No answer from man or God.
Shall I throw my lyre on the sod,
Rest, and give over the strife,
And sink in a voiceless life?

Said the Seer to the Poet: Arise
And give to the seas and the skies
The message that in thee burns.
Thrice speak, though the blue sky turns
Deaf ears, and the ocean spurns
Thy call. Though men despise
The word that from out thy heart
Flameth; do thou thy part.
Thrice speak it, aloud, I say,
Then go, released, on thy way;
Live thou deeply and wise;
Suffer as never before;
Know joy, till it cuts to the quick;
Eat the apple, Life, to the core.
Be thou cursed
By them thou hast blessed, by the sick
Whom thou in thy weakness nursed.
With thy strength the weak endue;
Be praised when 'twere better to blame;
In the home of thy spirit be true,
Though the voice of the street cry shame.
Be silent till all is done,

Then return, in the light of the sun,
And once more sing.
Oh, then fling
Into music thy soul! Tell the seas
Again all thy thought; Oh, be strong
Thy voice as the voice of the waves, as the voice of the trees!
Tell the blast,
That shall shudder as onward it flies
With thy word, with thy song;
Tell the skies,
And the world, that shall listen at last.

II.

THE POET AND HIS MASTER.

One day the poet's harp lay on the ground,
Though from it rose a strange and trembling sound
What time the wind swept over with a moan,
Or, now and then, a faint and tinkling tone
When a dead leaf fell shuddering from a tree
And shook the silent wires all tremulously;
And near it, dumb with sorrow, and alone
The poet sat. His heart was like a stone.

Then one drew near him who was robed in white:
It was the poet's master; he had given
To him that harp, once in a happy night
When every silver star that shone in heaven
Made music ne'er before was heard by mortal wight.
And thus the master spoke:

"Why is thy voice
Silent, O poet? Why upon the grass
Lies thy still harp? The fitful breezes pass
And touch the wires, but the skilled player's hand
Moves not upon them. Poet,— wake! Rejoice,
Sing and arouse the melancholy land."

"Master, forbear. I may not sing to-day:
My nearest friend, the brother of my heart,
This day is stricken with sorrow, he must part
From her who loves him. Can I sing, and play
Upon the joyous harp, and mock his woe?"

"Alas, and hast thou then so soon forgot
The bond that with thy gift of song did go —
Severe as fate, fixed and unchangeable?
Even though his heart be sounding its own knell
Dost thou not know this is the poet's lot:
'Mid sounds of war — in halcyon times of peace —
To strike the ringing wire and not to cease;
In hours of general happiness to swell
The common joy; and when the people cry

With piteous voice loud to the pitiless sky,
'Tis his to frame the universal prayer
And breathe the balm of song upon the accurséd air?"

"But 'tis not, O my master, that I borrow
The robe of grief to deck my brother's sorrow,—
Mine eyes have seen beyond the veil of youth;
I know what Life is, have caught sight of Truth;
My heart is dead within me; a thick pall
Darkens the mid-day sun."

"And dost thou call
This sorrow? Call this knowledge? O thou blind
And ignorant! Know, then, thou yet shalt find,
Ere thy full days are numbered 'neath the sun,
Thou, in thy shallow youth, hadst but begun
To guess what knowledge is, what grief may be,
And all the infinite sum of human misery;
Shalt find that for each drop of perfect good
Thou payest, at last, a threefold price in blood;
What is most noble in thee,— every thought
Highest and best,— crushed, spat upon, and brought

To an open shame; thy natural ignorance
Counted thy crime; the world all ruled by chance,
Save that the good most suffer; but above
These ills another,— cruel, monstrous, worse
Than all before,— thy pure and passionate love
Shall bring the old, immitigable curse."

"And thou who tell'st me this, dost bid me sing?"

"I bid thee sing, even though I have not told
All the deep flood of anguish shall be rolled
Across thy breast. Nor, Poet, shalt thou bring
From out those depths thy grief! Tell to the wind
Thy private woes, but not to human ear,
Save in the shape of comfort for thy kind.
But never hush thy song, dare not to cease
While life is thine. Haply, 'mid those who hear,
Thy music to one soul shall murmur peace,
Though for thyself it hath no power to cheer.

"Then shall thy still unbroken spirit grow
Strong in its silent suffering and more wise;

And as the drenched and thunder-shaken skies
Pass into golden sunset — thou shalt know
An end of calm, when evening breezes blow;
And looking on thy life with vision fine
Shalt see the shadow of a hand divine."

III.

MORS TRIUMPHALIS.

I.

In the hall of the king the loud mocking of many at one;
While lo! with his hand on his harp the old bard is undone!
One false note, then he stammers, he sobs like a child, he is failing,
And the song that so bravely began ends in discord and wailing.

II.

Can it be it is they who make merry, 'tis they taunting him?
Shall the sun, then, be scorned by the planets, the tree by the limb!
These bardlings, these mimics, these echoes, these shadows at play,
While he only is real:—they shine but as motes in his day!

III.

All that in them is best is from him; all they know he has taught;
But one secret he never could teach, and they never have caught,—
The soul of his songs, that goes sighing like wind through the reeds,
And thrills men, and moves them to terror, to prayer, and to deeds.

IV.

Has the old poet failed, then,—the singer forgotten his part?
Why, 'twas he who once startled the world with a cry from his heart;
And he held it entranced in a life-song, all music, all love;
If now it grow faint and grow still, they have called him above

V.

Ah, never again shall we hear such fierce music and sweet,—
Surely never from you, ye who mock,—for his foot-stool unmeet;
E'en his song left unsung had more power than the note ye prolong,
And one sweep of his harp-strings outpassioned the height of your song.

VI.

But a sound like the voice of the pine, like the roar of the sea
Arises. He breathes now; he sings; oh, again he is free.
He has flung from his flesh, from his spirit, their shackles accursed,
And he pours all his heart, all his life, in one passionate burst.

VII.

And now as he chants those who listen turn pale — are afraid;
For he sings of a God that made all, and is all that was made;
Who is maker of love, and of hate, and of peace, and of strife;
Smiles a world into life; frowns a hell, that yet thrills with his life.

VIII.

And he sings of the time that shall be when the earth
is grown old,
Of the day when the sun shall be withered, and
shrunken, and cold;
When the stars, and the moon, and the sun,— all their
glory o'erpast,—
Like apples that shrivel and rot, shall drop into the
Vast.

IX.

And onward and out soars his song on its journey
sublime,
Mid systems that vanish or live in the lilt of his
rhyme;
And through making and marring of races, and worlds,
still he sings
One theme, that o'er all and through all his wild
music outrings;—

X.

This one theme: that whate'er be the fate that has hurt us or joyed,
Whatever the face that is turned to us out of the void;
Be it cursing or blessing; or night, or the light of the sun;
Be it ill, be it good; be it life, be it death, it is ONE; —

XI.

One thought, and one law, and one awful and infinite power;
In atom, and world; in the bursting of fruit and of flower;
The laughter of children, and roar of the lion untamed;
And the stars in their courses — one name that can never be named.

XII.

But sudden a silence has fallen, the music has fled;
Though he leans with his hand on his harp, now indeed he is dead!
But the swan-song he sang shall for ever and ever abide
In the heart of the world, with the winds and the murmuring tide.

IV.

THE MASTER-POETS.

He the great World-Musician at whose stroke
The stars of morning into music broke;
He from whose Being Infinite are caught
All harmonies of light, and sound, and thought,—
Once in each age, to keep the world in tune
He strikes a note sublime. Nor late, nor soon,
A god-like soul,—music and passion's birth,—
Vibrates across the discord of the earth
And sets the world aright.
O, these are they
Who on men's hearts with mightiest power can play,—
The master-poets of humanity,
Sent down from heaven to lift men to the sky.

PART II.

I.

A CHRISTMAS HYMN.

I.

TELL me what is this innumerable throng
Singing in the heavens a loud angelic song?
These are they who come with swift and shining feet
From round about the throne of God the Lord of Light to greet.

II.

Oh, who are these that hasten beneath the starry sky—
As if with joyful tidings that through the world shall fly?—

The faithful shepherds these, who greatly were
afeared
When, as they watched their flocks by night,
the heavenly host appeared.

III.

Who are these that follow across the hills of night
A star that westward hurries along the fields of light?
Three wise men from the East who myrrh
and treasure bring
To lay them at the feet of him their Lord
and Christ and King.

IV.

What babe new-born is this that in a manger cries?
Near on her lowly bed his happy mother lies.
Oh, see the air is shaken with white and
heavenly wings —
This is the Lord of all the earth, this is the
King of Kings.

II.

EASTER.

I.

When in the starry gloom
They sought the Lord Christ's tomb,
Two angels stood in sight
All dressed in burning white
Who unto the women said,
"Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

II.

His life, his hope, his heart,
With death they had no part:
For this those words of scorn
First heard that holy morn,
When the waiting angels said,
"Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

III.

O, ye of this latter day,
Who journey the self-same way —
Through morning's twilight gloom
Back to the shadowy tomb:
To you, as to them, was it said,
"Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

IV.

The Lord is risen indeed,
He is here for your love, for your need —
Not in the grave, nor the sky,
But here where men live and die;
And true the word that was said,
"Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

V.

Wherever are tears and sighs,
Wherever are children's eyes,

Where man calls man his brother,
And loves as himself another,
Christ lives! The angels said
"Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

III.

A MADONNA OF FRA LIPPO LIPPI.

No HEAVENLY maid we here behold,
Though round her brow a ring of gold;
This baby, solemn-eyed and sweet,
Is human all from head to feet.

Together close her palms are prest
In worship of that godly guest:
But glad her heart and unafraid
While on her neck his hand is laid.

Two children, happy, laughing, gay,
Uphold the little child in play;
Not flying angels these, what though
Four wings from their four shoulders grow.

Fra Lippo, we have learned from thee
A lesson of humanity;
To every mother's heart forlorn,
In every house the Christ is born.

IV.

COST.

Because Heaven's cost is Hell, and perfect joy
Hurts as hurts sorrow; and because we win
No boon of grace without the cost of sin,
Or suffering born of sin; because the alloy
Of blood but makes the bliss of victory brighter;
Because true worth hath surest proof herein —
That it should be reproached, and called akin
To evil things, — black making white the whiter:
Because no cost seems great near this — that He
Should pay the ransom wherewith we were priced;
And none could name a darker infamy
Than that a god was spit upon — enticed
By those he came to save, to the accurséd tree —
For this I know that Christ indeed is Christ.

V.

THE SONG OF A HEATHEN.

(SOJOURNING IN GALILEE, A. D. 32.)

I.

If Jesus Christ is a man,—
And only a man,— I say
That of all mankind I cleave to him,
And to him will I cleave alway.

II.

If Jesus Christ is a God,—
And the only God,— I swear
I will follow Him through Heaven and hell,
The earth, the sea, and the air!

VI.

HOLY LAND.

THIS is the earth he walked on; not alone
That Asian country keeps the sacred stain;
'Tis not alone the far Judæan plain,
Mountain and river! Lo, the sun that shone
On him, shines now on us; when day is gone
The moon of Galilee comes forth again
And lights our path as his: an endless chain
Of years and sorrows makes the round world one.
The air we breathe, he breathed,—the very air
That took the mold and music of his high
And godlike speech.—Since then shall mortal dare
With base thought front the ever-sacred sky,—
Soil with foul deed the ground whereon he laid
In holy death his pale, immortal head!

VII.

ON A PORTRAIT OF SERVETUS.

THOU grim and haggard wanderer who dost look
With haunting eyes forth from the narrow page,—
I know what fires consumed with inward rage
Thy broken frame, what tempests chilled and shook!
Ah, could not thy remorseless foeman brook
Time's sure devourment, but must needs assuage
His anger in thy blood, and blot the age
With that dark crime which virtue's semblance took!
Servetus! that which slew thee lives to-day,
Though in new forms it taints our modern air;
Still in heaven's name the deeds of hell are done:
Still on the high-road, 'neath the noon-day sun,
The fires of hate are lit for them who dare
Follow their Lord along the untrodden way.

VIII.

"DESPISE NOT THOU."

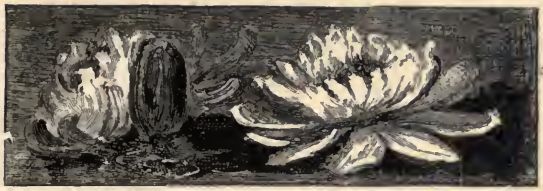
Despise not thou thy father's ancient creed,—
Of his pure life it was the golden thread
Whereon bright days were gathered, bead by bead,
Till holy Death lay low that reverend head.
From olden faith how many a glorious deed
Hath lit the world! its blood-stained banner led
The martyrs heavenward; yea, it was the seed
Of knowledge, whence our modern freedom spread.
Not always has man's *credo* proved a snare,—
But a deliverance, a sign, a flame
To purify the dense and pestilent air,—
Writing on pitiless heavens one pitying name:—
And 'neath the shadow of the dread eclipse
It shines on dying eyes and pallid lips.

IX.

"TO REST FROM WEARY WORK."

To REST from weary work one day of seven;
One day to turn our backs upon the world,
Its soil wash from us, and strive on to Heaven,—
Whereto we daily climb, but quick are hurled
Down to the pit of human pride and sin.
Help me, ye powers celestial! to come nigh;
Ah, let me catch one little glimpse within
The heavenly city, lest my spirit die.
These be my guides, my messengers, my friends:
Books of wise poets; the musician's art;
The ocean whose deep music never ends;
The silence of the forest's shadowy heart;
And, too, the brooding organ's solemn blare,
And kneeling multitudes' low-murmuring prayer.

PART III.



I.

RECOGNITION.

1.

IN darkness of the visionary night
This I beheld: Wide space and therein God,
God who in dual nature doth abide,—
Love, and the Loved One, Power and Beauty's self;
Him even the spirit's eye might not transfix
But sidelong gazed, fainting before the light.
And forth from God did come, with dreadful thrill,
And starry music like to million wires
That shiver with the breathings of the dawn,—
Creation, boundless, bodiless, unformed,

And white with trembling fire and light intense,
And outward pulsings like the boreal flame.
One mighty cloud it seemed, nor star, nor earth,
Or like a nameless growth of the under-seas:
Creation dumb, unconscious, yet alive
With some deep inward passion unexpressed,
And swift, concentric, never-ceasing urge,—
Resolving gradual to one disk of fire.
And as I looked, behold! the flying rim
Grew separate from the center; this again
Divided, and the whole still swift revolved,
Ring within ring, and fiery wheel in wheel;
Till, sudden or slow as chanced, the outmost edge
Whirled into fragments, each a separate sun,
With lesser globes attendant on its flight.
These while I gazed turned dark with smoldering fire
And, slow contracting, grew to solid orbs.
Then knew I that this planetary world,
Cradled in light, and curtained with the dawn
And starry eve, was born; though in itself
Complete and perfect all, yet but a part
And atom of the living universe.

II.

Unconscious still the child of the conscious God,—
Creation, born of Beauty and of Love,
Beauty the womb and mother of all worlds.
But soon with breathless speed the new-made earth
Swept near me where I watched the birth of things,
Its greatening bulk eclipsing, star by star,
Half the bright heavens. Then I beheld crawl forth
Upon the earth's cool crust most wondrous forms
Wherein were hid, in transmutation strange,
Sparks of the ancient, never-ending fire;
Shapes moved not solely by exterior law
But having will and motion of their own,—
First sluggish and minute, then by degrees
Monstrous, enorm. Then other forms more fine
Streamed ceaseless on my sight, until at last,
Rising and turning its slow gaze about
Across the abysmal void the mighty child
Of the supreme, divine Omnipotence —
Creation, born of God, by him begot,
Conscious in MAN, no longer blind and dumb,
Beheld and knew its father and its God.

II.

HYMN:

SUNG AT THE PRESENTATION OF THE OBELISK TO THE CITY OF NEW YORK, FEB. 22, 1881.

I.

GREAT God, to whom since time began
The world has prayed and striven;
Maker of stars, and earth, and man—
To thee our praise is given.
Here, by this ancient Sign
Of thine own Light divine,
We lift to thee our eyes
Thou Dweller of the Skies,—
Hear us, O God in Heaven!

II.

Older than Nilus' mighty flood
Into the Mid-Sea pouring,

Or than the sea, thou God hast stood,—
Thou God of our adoring!
Waters and stormy blast
Haste when thou bid'st them haste;
Silent, and hid, and still,
Thou sendest good and ill:
Thy ways are past exploring.

III.

In myriad forms, by myriad names,
Men seek to bind and mold thee;
But thou dost melt, like wax in flames,
The cords that would enfold thee.
Who madest life and light,
Bring'st morning after night,
Who all things did'st create—
No majesty, nor state,
Nor word, nor world can hold thee!

IV.

Great God, to whom since time began
The world has prayed and striven;

Maker of stars, and earth, and man—
To thee our praise is given.
Of suns thou art the Sun,—
Eternal, holy One:
Who can us help save thou!
To thee alone we bow!
Hear us, O God in Heaven!

III.

A THOUGHT.

Once, looking from a window on a land
That lay in silence underneath the sun:
A land of broad, green meadows, through which poured
Two rivers, slowly widening to the sea,—
Thus as I looked, I know not how nor whence,
Was borne into my unexpectant soul
That thought, late learned by anxious-witted man,
The infinite patience of the Eternal Mind.

IV.

THE VOICE OF THE PINE.

'Tis night upon the lake. Our bed of boughs
Is built where — high above — the pine-tree soughs.
'Tis still,—and yet what woody noises loom
Against the background of the silent gloom!
One well might hear the opening of a flower
If day were hushed as this. A mimic shower
Just shaken from a branch, how large it sounded,
As 'gainst our canvas roof its three drops bounded!
Across the rumpling waves the hoot-owl's bark
Tolls forth the midnight hour upon the dark.
What mellow booming from the hills doth come?—
The mountain quarry strikes its mighty drum.

Long had we lain beside our pine-wood fire,
From things of sport our talk had risen higher;
How frank and intimate the words of men
When tented lonely in some forest glen!

No dallying now with masks, from whence emerges
Scarce one true feature forth. The night-wind urges
To straight and simple speech. So we had thought
Aloud; no well-hid secrets but were brought
To light. The spiritual hopes, the wild,
Unreasoned longings that, from child to child,
Mortals still cherish (though with modern shame),—
To these, and things like these, we gave a name;
And as we talked, the intense and resinous fire
Lit up the towering boles, till nigh and nigher
They gathered round, a ghostly company,
Like beasts who seek to know what men may be.

Then to our hemlock beds, but not to sleep,—
For listening to the stealthy steps that creep
About the tent, or falling branch, but most
A noise was like the rustling of a host,
Or like the sea that breaks upon the shore,—
It was the pine-tree's murmur. More and more
It took a human sound. These words I felt
Into the skyey darkness float and melt:

"Heardst thou these wanderers reasoning of a time
When men more near the Eternal One shall climb?
How like the new-born child, who cannot tell
A mother's arm that wraps it warm and well!
Leaves of His rose; drops in His sea that flow,—
Are they, alas, so blind they may not know
Here, in this breathing world of joy and fear,
They can no nearer get to God than here."

V.

MORNING AND NIGHT.

I.

THE mountain that the morn doth kiss
Glad greets its shining neighbor:
Lord! heed the homage of our bliss,—
The incense of our labor.

II.

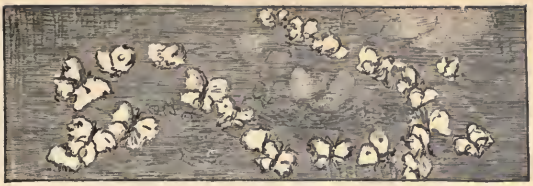
Now the long shadows eastward creep,
The golden sun is setting:
Take, Lord! the worship of our sleep,—
The praise of our forgetting.

VI.

"DAY UNTO DAY UTTERETH SPEECH."

THE speech that day doth utter, and the night,
Full oft to mortal ears it hath no sound;
Dull are our eyes to read upon the ground
What's written there; and stars are hid by light.
So when the dark doth fall, awhile our sight
Kens the unwonted orbs that circle round,
Then quick in sleep our human sense is bound:
Speechless for us the starry heavens and bright.
But when the day doth close there is one word
That's writ amid the sunset's golden embers;
And one at morn; by them our hearts are stirred:
Splendor of Dawn,—and Evening that remembers;
These are the rhymes of God; thus, line on line,
Our souls are moved to thoughts that are divine.

PART IV.



I.

THE SOUL.

THREE messengers to me from heaven came
And said: "There is a deathless human soul;—
It is not lost, as is the fiery flame
That dies into the undistinguished whole.
Ah, no; it separate is, distinct as God—
Nor any more than He can it be killed:
Then fearless give thy body to the clod,
For naught can quench the light that once it filled!"
Three messengers,—the first was human Love;
The second voice came crying in the night
With strange and awful music from above,—
None who have heard that voice forget it quite:
Birth is it named. The third, O, turn not pale!—
'Twas Death to the undying soul cried, Hail!

II.

"WHEN LOVE DAWNED."

When love dawned on that world which is my mind,
Then did the outer world wherein I went
Suffer a sudden strange transfigurement,—
It was as if new sight were given the blind.
Then where the shore to the wide sea inclined
I watched with new eyes the new sun's ascent:
My heart was stirred within me as I leant
And listened to a voice in every wind.
O purple sea! O joy beyond control!
O land of love and youth! O happy throng!
Were ye then real, or did ye only seem?
Dear is that morning twilight of the soul,—
The mystery, the waking voice of song,—
For now I know it was not all a dream.

III.

LOVE AND DEATH.

I.

Now who can take from us what we have known—
We that have looked into each other's eyes?
Though sudden night should blacken all the skies,
The day is ours, and what the day has shown.
What we have seen and been, hath not this grown
Part of our very selves? We, made love-wise,
What power shall slay our living memories,
And who shall take from us what is our own?
So, when a shade of the last parting fell,
This thought gave peace, as he deep comfort hath
Who, thirsting, drinks cool waters from a well.
But soon I felt more near that fatal breath:
More near he drew, till I his face could tell,
Till then unseen, unknown,— I looked on Death.

II.

We know not where they tarry who have died;
The gate wherein they entered is made fast:
No living mortal hath seen one who passed
Hither, from out that darkness deep and wide.
We lean on Faith; and some less wise have cried,
"Behold the butterfly, the seed that 's cast!"
Vain hopes that fall like flowers before the blast!
What man can look on Death unterrified?——
Who love can never die! They are a part
Of all that lives beneath the summer sky;
With the world's living soul their souls are one:
Nor shall they in vast nature be undone
And lost in the general life. Each separate heart
Shall live, and find its own, and never die.

IV.

FATHER AND CHILD.

Beneath the deep and solemn midnight sky,
At this last verge and boundary of time
I stand, and listen to the starry chime
That sounds to the inward ear, and will not die.
Now do the thoughts that daily hidden lie
Arise, and live in a celestial clime,—
Unutterable thoughts, most high, sublime,
Crossed by one dread that frights mortality.
Thus, as I muse, I hear my little child
Sob in its sleep within the cottage near,—
My own dear child! — Gone is that mortal doubt!
The Power that drew our lives forth from the wild
Our Father is; we shall to him be dear,
Nor from his universe be blotted out!

V.

"BEYOND THE BRANCHES OF THE PINE."

Beyond the branches of the pine
The golden sun no more doth shine,
But still the solemn after-glow
Floods the deep heavens with light divine.

The night-wind stirs the corn-field near,
The gray moon turns to silver clear,
And one by one the glimmering stars
In the blue dome of heaven appear.

Now do the mighty hosts of light
Across the darkness take their flight,—
They rise above the eastern hill
And silent journey through the night.

And there beneath the starry zone,
In the deep, narrow grave, alone,
Rests all that mortal was of her,
The purest spirit I have known.

VI.

AN AUTUMN MEDITATION.

As THE long day of cloud and storm and sun
Declines into the dark and silent night,
So passed the old man's life from human gaze;
But not till sunset, full of lovely light
And color that the day might not reveal,
Bathed in soft gloom the landscape.

Thus kind Heaven
Let me, too, die when Autumn holds the year,
Serene, with tender hues, and bracing airs,—
And near me those I love; with no black thoughts,
Nor dread of what may come! Yea, when I die
Let me not miss from nature the cool rush
Of northern winds; let Autumn sunset skies
Be golden; let the cold, clear blue of night
Whiten with stars as now! Then shall I fade
From life to life,—pass on the year's full tide

Into the swell and vast of the outer sea
Beyond this narrow world.

For autumn days
To me not melancholy are, but full
Of joy and hope, mysterious and high,
And with strange promise rife. Then it meseems
Not failing is the year, but gathering fire
Even as the cold increases.

Grows a weed
More richly here beside our mellow seas
That is the Autumn's harbinger and pride.
When fades the cardinal-flower, whose heart-red bloom
Glows like a living coal upon the green
Of the midsummer meadows, then how bright,
How deepening bright like mounting flame doth burn
The golden-rod upon a thousand hills!
This is the Autumn's flower, and to my soul
A token fresh of beauty and of life,
And life's supreme delight.

When I am gone,
Something of me I would might subtly pass
Within these flowers twain of all the year:
So might my spirit send a sudden stir
Into the hearts of those who love these hills,
These woods, these waves, and meadows by the sea.

VII.

"CALL ME NOT DEAD."

CALL me not dead when I, indeed, have gone
Into the company of the everliving
High and most glorious poets! Let thanksgiving
Rather be made. Say—"He at last hath won
Rest and release, converse supreme and wise,
Music and song and light of immortal faces:
To-day, perhaps, wandering in starry places,
He hath met Keats, and known him by his eyes.
To-morrow (who can say) Shakespeare may pass,—
And our lost friend just catch one syllable
Of that three-centuried wit that kept so well,—
Or Milton,—or Dante, looking on the grass
Thinking of Beatrice, and listening still
To chanted hymns that sound from the heavenly hill."

VIII.

"EACH MOMENT HOLY IS."

EACH moment holy is, for out from God
Each moment flashes forth a human soul.
Holy each moment is, for back to him
Some wandering soul each moment home returns.

IX.

"WHEN TO SLEEP I MUST."

WHEN to sleep I must
Where my fathers sleep;
When fulfilled the trust,
And the mourners weep;
When, though free from rust,
Sword hath lost its worth,—
Let me bring to earth
No dishonored dust.

X.

TO A DEPARTED FRIEND.

Dear friend, who lovedst well this pleasant life!
One year ago it is this very day
Since thou didst take thy uncompanioned way
Into the silent land, from out the strife
And joyful tumult of the world. The knife
Wherewith that sorrow cut us, still doth stay,
And we, to whom thou daily didst betray
Thy gentle soul, with faith and worship rife,
Love thee not less but more,— as time doth go
And we too hasten toward that land unknown
Where those most dear are gathering one by one.
The power divine that here did touch thy heart —
Hath this withdrawn from thee, where now thou art?
Would thou indeed couldst tell what thou dost know.

XI.

"THE EVENING STAR."

THE evening star trembles and hides from him
Who fain would hold it with imperious stare;
Yet, to the averted eye, lo! unaware
It shines serene, no longer shy and dim.
Oh, slow and sweet, its chalice to the brim
Fills the leaf-shadowed grape with rich and rare
Cool sunshine, caught from the white circling air!
Home from his journey to the round world's rim—
Through lonely lands, through cloudy seas and vext—
At last the Holy Grail met Launfal's sight.
So when my friend lost him who was her next
Of soul,—life of her life,—all day the fight
Raged with a dumb and pitiless God. Perplexed
She slept. Heaven sent its comfort in the night.

XII.

LIFE.

I.

GREAT Universe — what dost thou with thy dead!
Now thinking on the myriads that have gone
Into a seeming blank oblivion,
With here and there a most resplendent head,—
Eyes of such trancing sweetness, or so dread,
That made the soul to quake who looked thereon,—
All utterly wiped out, dismissed, and done:
Lost, speechless, viewless, and forever fled!
Myriad on myriad, past the power to count,—
Where are they, thou dumb Nature? Do they shine,
Released from separate life, in summer airs,
On moony seas, in dawns;—or up the stairs
Of spiritual being slowly mount
And by degrees grow more and more divine?

II.

Ah, thou wilt never answer to our call,
Thou Voiceless One,— naught in thee can be stirred,
What though the soul, like to a frightened bird,
Dash itself wildly 'gainst thy mountain-wall.
From Nature comes no answer, though we fall
In utmost anguish praying to be heard,
Or peer below, or our brave spirits gird
For steep and starry flight,— 'tis silent all.
In vain to question — save the heart of man,
The throbbing human heart, that still doth keep
Its truth, love, hope, its high and quenchless faith.
By day, by night, when all else faints in sleep,
"Naught is but Life," it cries, "there is no death;
Life, Life doth only live, since Life began."

XIII.

THE FREED SPIRIT.

Brother of sorrow and mortality!
Not always shall we chide the failing flesh
That lets the netted soul to silence fly,
Like a wild bird that breaks the treacherous mesh:
Not always shall men curse in stormy sky
The laughter and the fury of a Power
That sees its chance-born children sink and die,—
Hurling or death or life for dole or dower.
Who deep his spirit searches can deny
Oh nevermore, that life doth leave a trace
Of something not all heavenly; though we try
Daily to turn toward Heaven a steadfast face.
Even grief assoils us with its poisonous breath,—
Then free our spirits utterly, pure Death!

XIV.

UNDYING LIGHT.

I.

When in the golden western summer skies
A flaming glory starts, and slowly fades
Through crimson tone on tone to deeper shades,
There falls a silence, while the daylight dies
Lingering,—but not with human agonies
That tear the soul, or terror that degrades;
A holy peace the failing world pervades
Nor any fear of that which onward lies;
For well, ah well, the darkened vale recalls
A thousand times ten thousand vanished suns;
Ten thousand sunsets from whose blackened walls
Reflamed the white and living day that runs,
In light which brings all beauty to the birth,
Deathless forever round the ancient earth.

II.

O thou the Lord and Maker of life and light!
Full heavy are the burdens that do weigh
Our spirits earthward, as through twilight gray
We journey to the end and rest of night;
Though well we know to the deep inward sight
Darkness is but thy shadow, and the day
Where thou art never dies, but sends its ray
Through the wide universe with restless might.
O Lord of Light, steep thou our souls in thee!
That when the daylight trembles into shade,
And falls the silence of mortality,
And all is done,— we shall not be afraid,
But pass from light to light; from earth's dull gleam
Into the very heart and heaven of our dream.

THE END.

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